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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8727  
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RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 8670  
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RUEANHA/FAA WASHDC

UNCLAS PRETORIA 000932

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED  
SIPDIS

FAA FOR MCINTRON NANGELO  
DAKAR PASS TO FAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY IMPROVES  
SAFETY STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

REF: PRETORIA 00152

11. (SBU) Summary. The South Africa Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) has improved its compliance with international aviation safety standards according to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) technical assistance team. The FAA expects to conduct an audit of the SACAA in June to determine if SACAA will retain its favorable Category One status. The SACAA will be well-positioned for the audit if it is able to resolve two outstanding issues relating to civil aviation law and inspector qualifications. The FAA assured the SACAA that no pre-determination had been made regarding South Africa's status and that the FAA is pleased with the cooperation and work being done by the SACAA. If SACAA is downgraded by the FAA to a Category Two, South African airlines would be prevented from adding flights and routes and participating in code-share agreements with U.S. airlines. End Summary

12. (SBU) A FAA technical assistance team providing aviation safety consultations to the SACAA March 5 to 9 told Economic Counselor and the Civil Aviation Officer that the SACAA has completed 40% of the action items required to bring SACAA into compliance with international aviation safety standards. The action items are contained within a joint FAA/SACAA action plan developed to help SACAA meet International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) safety standards when the FAA conducts an audit in June. The FAA technical assistance team, reimbursed by SACAA, made its third of five planned visits and reported that significant progress had been made by the SACAA since FAA's last technical assistance visit in December when only 5% of the action items were complete. During a March 9 out-brief with SACAA, the FAA team leader praised the SACAA for making progress and for the SACAA's cooperation.

13. (SBU) Despite the progress, at least two issues remain unresolved which could cause the SACAA to be downgraded by the FAA from its current favorable Category One status. South Africa's civil aviation law presents a confusing and inefficient method for aviation safety oversight. The FAA team identified both short and long-term aviation law solutions for the SACAA to pursue. The SACAA also lacks operations inspectors who are technically qualified for certain types of aircraft that fly to the U.S. SACAA intends to hire qualified ICAO operations inspectors while the SACAA builds its own staff of inspectors. If the short-term aviation law solution and ICAO inspector contracting are implemented before the June audit, the SACAA will be in a better position to maintain its Category One status at that time.

¶4. (SBU) The FAA technical assistance team was also able to help resolve a miscommunication between FAA and SACAA. Prior to the team's arrival, SACAA CEO Zakes Myeza expressed concern to the Civil Aviation Officer that the FAA had made a pre-determination to downgrade South Africa from a Category One to a Category Two without waiting for the results of the June inspection. Myeza based his concerns on a February 22 conference call held between the FAA and South Africa's ICAO representative. The ICAO representative told Myeza and sent a memorandum to the Minister of Transport stating that South Africa was unlikely to pass the June audit and that the FAA was not pleased with the work being done by the SACAA. On the first day of the team's visit, a conference call was held between Myeza and FAA representatives in Washington to clarify that no pre-determination had been made and that the FAA was pleased with the cooperation and work of the SACAA thus far.

¶5. (SBU) The next steps are for the FAA to complete the last two scheduled technical assistance visits in April and May. These visits will be followed by the above-mentioned inspection in June. Based on progress reviewed during this inspection, the FAA will inform the SACAA whether it will remain in Category One or be downgraded to Category Two. Category Two status would prevent South African airlines from adding flights and routes and participating in code-share agreements (such as South African Airway's current code-share agreement with United Airlines). Embassy will keep Washington informed of the results of these visits.  
BOST